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Description

Technical field

This invention relates generally to data processing terminals and like computer input/output devices. The invention finds particular utility in the operation of a keyboard display terminal.

It is well known to control input/output devices directly by a computer and with the advent of microcomputers, control logic for controlling the operation of input/output hardware such as a display terminal often takes the form of a programmed microcomputer. The programs written for microcomputers are usually written in machine language or in an assembly language which can be directly translated into machine language. Alternatively, a program can be written in a higher level language and compiled on a larger computer into the machine level language of the microcomputer. As a result, the operation of the I/O device is relatively rigidly predetermined by the machine language program. Machine language programs are usually difficult to modify and modification of the operation of the input/output hardware is a task generally reserved for programmers accustomed to the specific microprocessor being used. If a system has several input/output control microprocessors of different manufacture, changing the system to perform a different application is very difficult and requires a high level of detail knowledge.

Where the program is compiled on a larger computer, significant communication time will be required to transmit the program to the microcomputer. Also modification of the operation of the I/O device to permit error recovery without restarting the entire operation is very difficult. Either, all of the error recovery must be predetermined in the microcomputer program or new programs must be transmitted from the host computer. For example, if a bank's customer has entered the account number, secret number, and amount of withdrawal, it would be advantageous to be able to instruct the customer to re-enter only one of these items if it was received in error at the host. The microcomputer program could be written to accommodate all anticipated error recovery situations, but even then it would be desirable to handle unanticipated situations from a manually attended station at the host computer. If machine level programs must be transmitted from the host computer to the microcomputer, human intervention into a transaction being attempted at a remote cash issuing machine will be very complicated and time consuming.

It is also well known to program a computer in a higher level language such as APL, which is more readily understood by computer programmers and computer users. Each instruction in the higher level language is often interpreted by the computer into a sequence of simpler machine level instructions which are executed in order to execute the function called for by the higher level instruction. Another example of higher level instruction is a macro instruction, which again is interpreted into the sequence of lower level instructions required to execute the desired function. Whether the higher level instructions are interpreted as mentioned above, compiled, or assembled, the final sequence of machine instruction is defined by the original sequence of higher level instructions.

It has been found to be costly to implement high level languages such as APL, or macro-languages in microcomputers because the interpreting required for high level languages requires a large amount of read only memory. This overhead interpretation cost is further magnified by the fact that the operation of input/output hardware is not often changed in comparison to the amount of changes that are made in main computer programs and the burden of carrying the higher level language at the input/output level is difficult to justify.

It is an object of the present invention to provide a terminal which can operate at a relatively high level language which can be altered, more or less within the same storage space, in toto or in detail and substantially in real time.

Accordingly, the present invention provides a data processing terminal of the type including a keyboard and controlled by programmable computing means to effect transactions composed of sequences of predetermined data processing functions, at least some such functions requiring a subroutine of sequential program steps to be performed by said computing means and having an interface connectable to a host of data processor, characterised by a control table store arranged to contain a set of individually accessible coded function control statements, one for and determining each of said predetermined data processing functions, a sequence table store, directly writeable by a connected host via the interface and arranged to contain a set of coded pointers, each pointer identifying an associated function control statement, sequence control means including a sequence pointer register and a return register, directly accessible by a connected host via the interface and independently by the keyboard adapted to render pointers from said sequence table store effective in sequence to access their associated function control statements, and decoding logic adapted to decode each function control statement so accessed to cause the subroutine of program steps corresponding to such statement to be performed by said computing means, whereby a transaction, whether or not commanded by the host is effected in general by the performance of a sequence of sub-routines of data processing functions determined by the sequence function control statement accessed under the control of said sequence control means, such sequence being able to be started at an arbitrary point determined by the external loading of the sequence control means, and being able to be altered in real time by rewriting of the whole or part of the sequence table store by the host via the interface.

Generally speaking, the control of terminals by tables is known. EP—A—14312 is an example of a data processing terminal controlled by programmable computing means and a custom key set table to effect transactions composed of sequences of predetermined data processing functions, at least some of which require a series of program steps to be performed by the computing means and IBM Technical Disclosure Bulletin, Vol. 21, No. 7, December 1978, pages 2667—2670 is an example controlled by plural tables, one of which is a sequencing table. In this latter reference, access to the sequence table, which defines preset line protocols, is by way of at least one other table so that the only complete protocols can be accessed. In the present invention, the host has direct access to the sequencing table, both at the start of a predefined sequence and at any intermediate point thereof and can rewrite the sequence table, or any part thereof, the keyboard, and thus the terminal, having access only to the starts of sequences. Thus, the terminal operates at one language level while the host can operate the terminal at that language level as well as at the next lower language level which means that the host can restart a sequence at an intermediate point thereof and can rearrange the sequences thus effectively altering the higher level language at which the terminal operates. Without direct access to the sequencing table this is not possible.

The function controlling information of a program is thus separated from portions of the sequence of execution controlling information, each being stored in the form of tables. The function controlling information takes the form of a table including a plurality of function specifying entries. The function execution sequence controlling information takes the form of a table of pointers. Accordingly, function controlling entries, each having a plurality of fields for defining, modifying, and specifying the functions and related data to be executed, need not be repetitively duplicated throughout the program. Instead, the shorter pointers to the function table entries can be provided in the sequence table in the sequence in which the functions are to be executed.

Further economy of storage may be obtained by retaining a first level of function specifying information in the sequence table in the form of a bit identifying whether the function to be executed is a complex function, in which case the pointer identifies an entry in the function control statement table, or whether the function to be executed is merely the display of information on a display, in which case the pointer in the sequence table entry specifies an entry in a guidance table.

An example of how the invention may be put into effect will now be described with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:—

Figure 1 is a schematic diagram showing physical wiring connections between a control microcomputer and input/output hardware embodying the invention.

Figure 2 is a diagram showing the logical relationship of the microprocessor, the read only storage microprogram, and the read/write storage of Figure 1.

Figure 3 shows the start/translate table entry format.

Figure 4 shows the sequence table entry format.

Figure 5 shows the meanings of the various bits of the various fields of the function control statement table entries.

Figure 6 shows a flow diagram of the operation of a terminal using the invention.

Description of a best mode for carrying out the invention

Referring to Figure 1, an example embodiment of the invention in the form of an Intel 8085 microprocessor 11 driving a linear light emitting diode display 13 with information from a keyboard 15, a magnetic stripe reader 17, or a host computer 19 is shown. The display 13 is connected to the microprocessor 11 by display drive circuits and adapter logic 21. Logic 21 has a programmed I/O bus connection 23 to microprocessor 11 and an address and data bus connection 25 to the memory for receiving display data from a memory mapped display output buffer. Likewise, the communication adapter 31 has a programmed I/O bus connection 33 to microprocessor 11 and an address and data connection 35 to the memory. The auto call unit 37 and modem unit 39 are connected to communication adapter 31 for communication to host computer 19. The keyboard and magnetic stripe reader adapter 41 is similar to the other adapters but, in this case, is also implemented by a microprogrammed microprocessor. Adapter 41 has a programmed I/O bus connection 43 to microprocessor 11 and an address and data bus connection 45 to the memory. Keyboard 15 and magnetic stripe reader 17 are connected to input and output registers, not shown, which are memory mapped to the microprocessor of adapter 41. As shown in the block contiguous with microprocessor 11, the available address space of microprocessor 11 is divided into read only storage, read/write storage, including memory mapped buffers, and the control tables. The control tables and fixed storage are implemented in CMOS technology so that data stored in these portions of the storage address space can be retained with battery power when A/C power is turned off at the terminal. Merely reloading these short tables permits the terminal's functional characteristics to be altered to suit a different application.

Some applications, in particular point of sale, involve networks of high numbers of terminals, configured in geographically widely dispersed locations. In this case, there is benefit in being able to modify terminal functions as applications change and as more applications are performed, and to control this change from a central site.

Referring now to Figure 2, a logical diagram of the relationship between the keyboard, display, host computer, and read/write storage with various tables is set forth in order to provide a better understanding of the operation of a peripheral processor incorporating the invention. A matrix of keys on keyboard 15 provides key coordinate signals to translate table 117 through a plurality of logic gates 119. The logic gates 119 in this preferred embodiment are implemented in the microprogram in read only storage 51 of Figure 1.

During normal operation, the keyboard can be used in two different states. A first state is during the wait state when the terminal is waiting for the next command in the form of a function keystroke from the keyboard. When a function key is depressed while the terminal is in the wait state, the coordinates of the function key are gated into translate table 117 which in turn provides the pointer to an entry in the sequence table 63. The translate table 117 contains a separate entry for each key. In the embodiment of this example, there are ten numeric keys and six function/data keys for a total of sixteen. Accordingly, the translate table need have only sixteen entries. Four additional keys are provided on keyboard 15. They are Cancel, Dial, Clear and Enter. The functions performed by these keys are permanent in nature and can, therefore, be permanently implemented in the microprogram of read only storage 51 and need not be translated in accordance with the invention. A further explanation of these permanent functions will be provided subsequently as part of the explanation of the operation of the invention.

In this example, each entry in the translate table is an eight bit byte. One of the bits in each entry of the translate table specifies whether the key being depressed is a data key or a function key. If the key being depressed is a data key, the remaining seven bits of the byte is the ASCII code for the key being depressed. This ASCII data code is entered into read/write store 53.

If the key being depressed is a function key, the remaining seven bits are a sequence pointer to an entry in sequence table 63. Although seven bits will point to one hundred and twenty eight different entries, only sixty-four are used as will be explained below.

Translate table 117 is connected to a sequence pointer register 121 which temporarily stores the sequence pointer received from translate table 117 or received directly from host computer 19. Sequence pointer register 121 is part of a stack of two registers including the sequence pointer register 121 and a return register 123. The return register 123 is used if a sub-routine call is to be implemented. The sequence pointer register is incremented by the microprogram in read only storage 51 function specified for execution by an entry in function control statement table 65, also shown in Figure 1.

As previously stated, the pointer in sequence pointer register 121 points to an entry in sequence table 63. Each entry in sequence table 63 is also a single byte entry. Referring to Figure 4, it can be seen that the most significant bit of each byte is used to implement call and return sequencing. If the most significant bit is a binary one, and the next most significant bit is a binary zero, a call sequence is to be executed and the six lesser significant bits are the pointer to the sequence table entry where the called sub-routine sequence is stored. It is this limitation of six lesser significant bits that limits the sequence table 63 to sixty-four entries. The call sequence pointer is transferred into sequence pointer register 121 after the contents of sequence pointer register 121 has been pushed into the return register 123. Inasmuch as sequence pointer register 121 now points to the start of the subroutine, the sequence of functions pointer to by the entries in the sequence table beginning with this new point, are executed in sequence as the microprogram of read/only storage 51 interprets and executes each function control statement and increments sequence pointer register 121. When a sequence table entry has a binary one in the two most significant bit positions, a return to the original sequence is taken by popping the original sequence pointer out of return register 123 into sequence pointer register 121.

If the most significant bit of a sequence table entry is a binary zero, a function is to be executed. If the second most significant bit is also a binary zero, the six lesser significant bits are a pointer into the function control table. If the most significant bit is a binary zero and the next most significant bit is a binary one, the six lesser significant bits are a pointer into the guidance table 67.

A sequence table entry of all binary one's (hex FF), signifies that the end of a sequence has been encountered. The microprogram in read/only store 51 interprets this all-ibe's-sequence table entry as a command to put the terminal in the wait state and permit a function key stroke from keyboard 15 to start a new sequence via translate table 117.

Referring now to Figure 5, a table is shown indicating the significance of each bit in the four bytes of each function control statement. The byte zero is the opcode byte analogous to the opcode of any computer instruction. Because of the limited function of the terminal of this example, only four bits of the opcode byte are required and the least significant four bits have been chosen to implement ten different opcodes.

Opcode 1 specifies a read keyboard function. Opcode 3 specifies a read magnetic stripe function. Opcode 5 specifies that an immediate data byte from byte 3 is to be read. Opcodes 6, 7, 8 and 9 specify that bytes from storage areas 1, 2, 3 and 4 are to be read. These opcodes may be used for dialling. Opcode A specifies that the data in the message in read/write storage is to be transmitted to the host computer. Opcode B specifies that a branch is to be taken to the sequence table pointed to by the contents of byte one. Opcode C specifies that a conditional or selective branch is to be taken.

The byte one of a function control statement specifies the field length in read statements and is the pointer in fixed and conditional, but not selective, branch statements. Accordingly, when a branch function control statement is being executed, the contents of byte one are transferred to sequence pointer register 121 depending upon whether or not the branch is taken. Note, however, that a selective branch function causes a new sequence pointer to be received from branch table 133.

Byte two of each function control statement, as shown in Figure 5, constitutes an opcode modifier byte. Bit 1 is a branch modifier bit which converts a conditional branch opcode C to a selective branch opcode.

When a selective branch function is executed, the selective branch line from function control statement decode 129 to gates 119 in Figure 2 is active. Gates 119 then cause keyboard input signals to access entries in branch table 133 and effectively be translated into sequence pointer values. Branch table 133 operates almost identically to translate branch table 117 except that instead of initiating an entirely new sequence of functions, branch table 133 merely causes the sequence of functions being executed to follow one of 16 possible alternatives.

Bit 2 is the dial modifier bit which causes the data being read from a storage area to be presented to the auto call adapter 37 instead of being transferred to the message buffer in read/write store 53.

Bit 3 is a left zero fill bit which causes the higher order character positions of a variable length field to be filled out with zeros when the Enter key is depressed.

Bit 4 is the variable input control bit which permits key entry of less characters than the maximum field length specified by the second byte of the same function control statement. Depression of the enter key causes the data byte in the fourth byte position to be inserted into the input buffer in read/write store 53 as a delimiter byte indicating the end of the field. If the left zero field bit 3 is also on, the maximum field length is filled out with zeros and the key entered data will be right justified in the field.

Bit 5 of byte two of a function control statement is a wait bit. The wait modifier bit modifies a keyboard input opcode to inhibit advance of sequence pointer register 121 until the enter key is depressed. If the wait modifier bit is not a binary one, the key entry field must be a fixed length field. The wait bit permits the user to look at the entire entered field before the terminal sequences to the next function to be executed. The operator of the terminal could use the Cancel key or Clear key instead of the Enter key. If the function control statement opcode is transmit, the wait bit modifier causes the terminal to wait for a response message transmitted from the host before the sequence pointer register 121 can be incremented to the next sequence step. If the wait bit is off, the terminal proceeds to the next sequence step as soon as transmission of the inbound message to the host has been completed.

Bit 6 is the hex mode bit and permits data to be read from fixed storage locations 71 of Figure 1 in hexadecimal.

Modifier bit 7 is the track display modifier for read keyboard, read storage and read immediate opcode. When on during execution of a read keyboard function, the input data will be displayed. Data is entered at the right of the display and shifts to the left as each new key entry occurs. During read storage and read immediate function, the displayed data is left justified on the display yielding the same display appearance as when executing a read keyboard function.

The byte three of the function control statement is the immediate data byte. The immediate data byte has four uses. First, during a conditional branch function execution, byte three is compared with the keyboard input to determine if the branch is to be taken. Second, byte three is used as the end of field delimiter on variable length fields. Third, this immediate data byte is the source of input for the read immediate command. Fourth, the immediate data byte is used as a displacement into storage 71 when executing a read storage function.

Operation of the invention

Having described the structural implementation of the invention, the operation of a terminal employing method and apparatus according to the invention will be explained with reference to Table 1, which is a list of twenty function control statements and, Table 2, which is an example guidance table. Table 3 contains a listing of the sequence table entry numbers, the pertinent function control statement numbers, the pertinent guidance table entry numbers, and comments for each step in the operation of a plurality of transactions which can be executed by the example keyboard display terminal employing the invention.

TABLE 1

NO.	BYTE 0 FUNCT	BYTE 1 LENGTH	BYTE 2 MODIFY	BYTE 3 IMD
00	ST03	12	H,DIAL	00
	Comment: Dial (1*800 number)			
01	ST01	13		00
	Comment: MSG HEADER DATA FROM STOR 1			
02	IMD			4C
	Comment: START OF MAGNETIC DATA IDENTIFIER			
03	MSR			
	Comment: MSR DATA TO MSG BFR			
04	IMD			1B
	Comment: ESC CHAR			

TABLE 1 (contd.)

NO.	BYTE 0 FUNCT	BYTE 1 LENGTH	BYTE 2 MODIFY	BYTE 3 IMD
05	IMD Comment: ETX CHAR			03
06	KBD Comment: 0—5 DIGITS+ENTER	5	V,W	1B
07	XMIT Comment, TRANSMIT, WAIT FOR HOST RESP	W		
08	SELBR Comment: SELECTIVE BRANCH			
09	IMD Comment: $ CHAR to MSG BFR			3C
10	KBD Comment: 0—16 DIGITS+ENTER	16	V,W	1B
11	KBD Comment: 0—1 DIGITS+ENTER	1	V,W	1B
12	KBD Comment: 0—4 DIGITS+ENTER	4	V,W	1B
13	KBD Comment: 0—2 DIGITS+ENTER	2	V,W	1B
14	IMD Comment: ACC # FIELD IDENTIFIER			3C
15	IMD Comment: SEQ # FIELD IDENTIFIER			—
16	IMD Comment: APPR CODE FIELD IDENTIFIER			—
17	BR Comment: UNCONDITIONAL BRANCH TO SEQ 05	5		
18	IMD Comment: NULL CHAR			00
19	BR Comment: UNCONDITIONAL BRANCH TO SEQ 08	8		
20	BR Comment: UNCONDITIONAL BRANCH TO SEQ 48	48		

TABLE 2

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
0	INSE	RT F	ORM*	ENTE	R DO	LLAR	AMO	UNT*	ENTE	R AC
1	COUN	T #*	ENTE	R SE	QUEN	CE#*	ENTE	R FU	NCTI	ON C
2	ODE*				ENTE	R AP	PR C	ODE*	IN P	ROCE
3	SS	ENTE	R CA	RD T	YPE*	SWIP	E CA	RD *		

*is hex 'FF' (End of message segment)

Guidance Table 2, above, is organized in four byte words, just as the function control statement table is organized. In fact, the guidance table can be viewed as merely an extension of the function control statement Table 1 with the next to the highest order bit of the sequence table entry interpreted as the next higher order address bit. Use of both highest order bits to define CALL and RETURN functions preclude such a simplified implemention in this preferred embodiment, however.

Each four byte word in the guidance Table 2 is identified by the row number representing the tens position and the column number being the units. For example, display table entry thirty-five begins the message "SWIPE CARD". Because each word includes four bytes, actual addressing involves adding a base address value to four times the guidance message number to get the first byte of the message from memory. An example of a microprogram to implement actual retrieval from memory appears in Table 4.

TABLE 3

ROUT	SEQ#	FCS#	GUID#	COMMENT
HDR	00	00	—	Dial (1*800 number form STOR 3)
	01	01	—	MSG header from STOR 1
MSR	02	02	—	MSR Field char from IMD field
	03	03	—	Read MSR data to MSG BFR
	04	04	—	End of Field Char from IMD field
$AMT	05	—	03	Prompt "ENTER DOLLAR AMOUNT"
	06	09	—	Amt Char hex $ from IMD field
	07	06	—	Read Amt Field+Enter Key
XMIT	08	—	28	Prompt "IN PROCESS"
	09	18	—	NULL Char from IMD field
	10	05	—	ETX Char from IMD field
	11	07	—	Transmit and Wait HOST response
	12	hex'FF' in		SEQ Byte to return to wait state
	13	00	—	Dial (1*800 number from STOR 3)
	14	01	—	MSG Header from STOR 1
ACCT	15	—	31	Prompt "ENTER CARD TYPE"
	16	11	—	Read KBD 1 Char+ENTER
	17	—	08	Prompt "ENTER ACCOUNT #"
	18	14	—	hex# Char from IMD field
	19	10	—	Read KBD 16 Char Acct#+ENTER
BR	20	17	—	Branch to SEQ 05
	21	—	16	Prompt "ENTER FUNCTION CODE"

TABLE 3 (contd.)

ROUT	SEQ#	FCS#	GUID#	COMMENT
HDR	22	00	—	Dial (1*800 number from STOR 3)
	23	01	—	MSG header from STOR 1
	24	08	—	Selective Branch
				0 Key — SEQ 08 Initialization
				1 Key — SEQ 08 Trial Balance
				2 Key — SEQ 05 Balance
				3 Key — SEQ 02 Credit (w card)
				4 Key — SEQ 25 Add on
				5 Key — Seq 32 Delete
				6 Key — SEQ 25 Change
				7 Key — SEQ 39 Bulletin (w card)
				8 Key — SEQ 44 Preauth. (w card)
				B Key — SEQ 15 Credit (w/o card)
				C Key — SEQ 55 Bulletin (w/o card)
$AMT	25	—	03	Prompt "ENTER DOLLAR AMOUNT"
	26	09	—	AMT Char hex $ from IMD field
	27	06	—	Read Amt Field+ENTER Key
SEQ#	28	—	12	Prompt "ENTER SEQUENCE #"
	29	15	—	SEQ # character from IMD Field
	30	12	—	Read KBD 4 Char SEQ field+ENTER
	31	17	—	Branch to SEQ 05
$AMT	32	—	03	Prompt "ENTER DOLLAR AMOUNT"
	33	09	—	Amt Char hex $ from IMD field
	34	06	—	Read Amt Field+Enter Key
SEQ#	35	—	12	Prompt "ENTER SEQUENCE #"
	36	15	—	SEQ # character from IMD field
	37	12	—	Read KBD 4 Char SEQ field+ENTER
	38	19	—	Branch to SEQ 08
	39	—	35	Prompt "SWIPE CARD"

TABLE 3 (contd.)

ROUT	SEQ#	FCS#	GUID#	COMMENT
MSR	40	02	—	Field Identifier from IMD field
	41	03	—	Read MSR Data to MSG BFR
	42	04	—	End of Field Char from IMD field
	43	19	—	Branch to SEQ 08
	44	—	35	Prompt "SWIPE CARD"
MSR	45	02	—	Field Identifier from IMD field
	46	03	—	Read MSR Data to MSG BFR
	47	04	—	End of Field Char from IMD field
$AMT	48	—	03	Prompt "ENTER DOLLAR AMOUNT"
	49	09	—	Amt Char Hex $ from IMD field
	50	06	—	Read Amt Field+Enter Key
APP	51	—	24	Prompt "ENTER APPR CODE"
	52	16	—	Approval Code Field Identifier
	53	13	—	Read KBD 2 Char+Enter Key
	54	19	—	Branch to SEQ 08
ACCT	55	—	31	Prompt "ENTER CARD TYPE"
	56	11	—	Read KBD 1 Char+Enter
	57	—	08	Prompt "ENTER ACCOUNT #"
	58	14	—	hex# Char from IMD field
	59	10	—	Read KBD 16 Char ACCT#+ENTER
BR	60	19	—	Branch to SEQ 08

Sequence table entry numbers 00 through 12 of Table 3 define a normal charge transaction using a magnetic stripe card. Figure 6 shows a flow diagram of the terminal operation under control of the sequences in Table 3. Control of the terminal is transferred from the wait state 151 to sequence table entry number 00 by passing the magnetic stripe card through the card reader. The start of message code on the beginning of the stripe is received directly from adapter 41 by programmed I/O bus 43 for translation at block 159 into the sequence table entry number 00 which is then stored in the sequence pointer register 121 at block 161. Sequence table entry 00 points to function control statement entry 00, which from Table 1, can be seen to be an instruction to read the telephone number from storage location 3 and activate the auto call adapter 37 to dial the telephone number stored in storage location 3 of fixed storage 71. Having activated the auto call adapter 37, at Figure 6, block 181, the microprogram in read only storage 51 increments the count in sequence pointer register 121 at Figure 6, block 183 to point to sequence table entry 01. Sequence table entry 01 points to function control statement 01 which reads the information in fixed storage location 1 of fixed store 71 to provide the header information for the message which will be ultimately transmitted to the host computer. The header information is transferred to the message buffer of read write store 53. Read write store 53 is a part of random access memory operated sequentially by the microprogram. That is, the first byte goes in the first byte location and any subsequently written byte is stored in a following byte location under control of the microprogram in read only storage 51. Subsequent sequence table entry numbers 02, 03 and 04 select corresponding instructions in the function control statement table to identify a field, read magnetic stripe data from a hardware magnetic stripe data buffer, and insert an end of field character from the immediate field of functional control statements, 02, 03, and 04.

Field identification is accomplished by moving the MSR field identifier character byte from the immediate field of function control statement 02 to the message buffer in read write store 53. Magnetic stripe data is read and must be passed to a hardware shift register because it arrives faster than can be handled by the Intel 8041 in adapter 41. The MSR data in the hardware shift register is moved to the microcomputer through the memory mapped KBD DATA/CMDS storage area 57, one byte at a time.

When the microprogram in read only storage 51 increments the sequence pointer register 121 to sequence table entry 05, a binary one bit is found at Figure 6, block 167, in the next to the highest bit position causing the binary number three in the six lower order positions to be interpreted as the third word of the guidance table shown in Table 2. Guidance table words three through seven contain the guidance display message "ENTER DOLLAR AMOUNT". A hex FF appears after the word AMOUNT, which is recognized by the microprogram in read only storage 51 as an end of guidance message character at Figure 6, block 173 to again increment the sequence pointer register 21 to sequence 06. The guidance message remains on display 13 until the next function control statement has been fully executed. Sequence 06 points to function control statement entry number 09 to insert a dollar sign in the front of the amount field to be subsequently entered. Sequence number 07 points to function control statement 06 which is an instruction to read up to 5 bytes from the keyboard and wait until the enter key has been depressed. Sequence numbers 08, 09, 10 and 11 cause a display of an "IN PROCESS" guidance message, insert the transmission control characters, and transmit the requested dollar amount to be charged to the host computer and wait for a response.

The host computer program will act upon the requested charge and return a message such as "Approved" or "Not Approved". An approved response may also include an approval number which the clerk is to write on the sales document, or if a printer is part of the terminal, the number can be printed on the document by the printer. In this example, host display messages are directly displayed on display 13 under control of the microprogram in read only store 51. This is the most efficient way to display response messages from host computer 19 because there is a very low likelihood that there would be a need for the institution owning the terminal to change the method of display at the terminal. This is because the message itself is created at the host computer 19 and can be provided in any sequence desired.

After a response message has been received from host computer 19 and displayed on display 13, the microprogram in read only storage 51 increments sequence pointer register 121 to sequence 12 which contains all one bits. The all one bits are interpreted by the microprogram to return the terminal to the wait state.

In the event that the dollar amount requested was excessive, the host computer could display a message on display 13 such as "amount requested too large". Thereafter, the host computer could send a sequence pointer byte containing the number five to sequence pointer register 121. The new contents of sequence pointer 121 would then reinitiate this normal charge transaction at sequence step 05 causing the display of "Enter Dollar Amount" permitting the terminal user to enter a smaller dollar amount which may be within the line of credit without repeating sequence steps of dialing the telephone and reading the magnetic stripe card. Alternately, at the discretion of the institution owning the terminal, the host computer could send a different sequence number to continue the transaction at a different step in the sequence without requiring any change in the microprogram of read only storage 51, and without anticipating at what step in the sequence the transaction need be continued.

The remainder of Table 3 shows several transactions, many of which utilize function control statement number 17 to branch to sequence pointer table entry number 5 to complete the transaction. At sequence number 38 of Table 3, however, a branch is taken to sequence number 8 to bypass entering the dollar amount.

At sequence step 24 of Table 3, a selective branch is executed by function control statement 08 to permit the terminal operator to select one of a plurality of transactions from the keyboard by depressing the appropriate key. The operator is guided to depress the appropriate key by the previously displayed prompt message "Enter Function Code".

As can be seen from a review of the Tables 1 through 3, flexible operation of a peripheral I/O device can be obtained without consideration of every possible change in a transaction which might be desired by the institution owning the terminal.

TABLE 4

LOC	OBJECT CODE	ADR1	SOURCE STATEMENT	COMMENT
00297	2A1440	4014	LHLD STADR	GET SEQ TABLE ADDRESS
0029A	7E		MOV A,M	MOVE SEQ BYTE TO ACC
0029B	FEFF		CPI FF	IS THIS END OF SEQ
0029D	CAE202	02E2	JZ FCSA	JUMP IF END OF SEQ
002A0	E6C0		ANI C0	
002A2	FEC0		CPI C0	TEST FOR RETURN CODE
002A4	CA3403	0334	JZ FCSH	JUMP IF RETURN CODE
002A7	FE80		CPI	
002A9	7E		MOV A,M	MOVE SEQ BYTE TO ACC
002AA	CA1E03	031E	JZ FCSI	JUMP IF CALL CODE
002AD	E640		ANI 40	TEST FOR GUIDANCE MESSAGE
002AF	7E		MOV A,M	MOVE SEQ BYTE TO ACC
002B0	C2FD02	02FD	JNZ FCSB	JUMP IF THIS IS A GUIDANCE MESSAGE
002B3	210348	4803	LXI H,FCSTBL	GET FCS TABLE BASE ADDRESS
002B6	4F		MOV C,A	MOVE SEQ BYTE TO REG C
002B7	0600		MVI B,0	ZERO REG B
002B9	CD3D03	033D	CALL MODSTA	MULTIPLY FCS PTR IN SEQ BYTE BY 4
002BC	09		DAD B	GENERATE TRUE FCS ADDRESS BY ADDING 4 TIMES SEQ BYTE TO START ADDRESS OF FCS TABLE TO GET FIRST BYTE OF THE FCS
002BD	CD4D03	034D	CALL FCSFET	FETCH AND DECODE FCS INSTRUCTION

Referring now to Table 4 above, an example microprogram for programming an Intel 8085 microcomputer to execute the example operation of fetching the next function control statement is set forth. Because the machine language of the Intel 8085 is well known in the published literature, an explanation of the instructions in this program will not be stated in detail.

The microprogram of Table 4 has nineteen instructions. The first two instructions implement block 163 of Figure 6. Instructions five through ten relate to CALL and RETURN which are not shown in Figure 6. Instructions eleven, twelve and thirteen perform the decision of decision block 167 in Figure 6. Instructions fourteen through eighteen execute the function block 179 and instruction nineteen points to a sub-routine which executes block 181.

Claims

1. A data processing terminal of the type including a keyboard (41) and controlled by programmable computing means to effect transactions composed of sequences of predetermined data processing functions, at least some such functions requiring a subroutine of sequential program steps to be performed by said computing means and having an interface connectable to a host of data processor, characterised by a control table store (65) arranged to contain a set of individually accessible coded function control statements, one for and determining each of said predetermined data processing functions, a sequence table store (63), directly writeable by a connected host via the interface and arranged to contain a set of coded pointers, each pointer identifying an associated function control statement, sequence control means (121, 123, 125) including a sequence pointer register and a return register, directly accessible by a

connected host via the interface and independently by the keyboard adapted to render pointers from said sequence table store effective in sequence to access their associated function control statements, and decoding logic (129) adapted to decode each function control statement so accessed to cause the subroutine of program steps corresponding to such statement to be performed by said computing means, whereby a transaction, whether or not commanded by the host is effected in general by the performance of a sequence of sub-routines of data processing functions determined by the sequence function control statement accessed under the control of said sequence control means, such sequence being able to be started at an arbitrary point determined by the external loading of the sequence control means, and being able to be altered in real time by rewriting of the whole or part of the sequence table store by the host via the interface.

2. A terminal as claimed in claim 1 wherein the sequence pointer register is provided with means for incrementing the contents thereof to point to the next sequential entry therein.

3. A terminal as claimed in claim 1 wherein the keyboard interfaces with the sequence table store via a translate table store responsive to input signals representing input characters from the keyboard to access coded definitions of such input characters stored in the table, some of the definitions including a pointer to an entry in the sequence table and others of the definitions including a data code representation of the corresponding input character, a pointer, if accessed, being applied to the sequence pointer register to initiate utilisation of the entry pointed to and, in general, also subsequent sequential entries thereto.

4. A terminal as claimed in claim 3 further including means for displaying guidance messages to an operator of the keyboard and a guidance message table store containing a plurality of guidance messages, the sequence table including guidance pointers to entries in the guidance pointer table which, when accessed, cause the corresponding guidance message to be passed from the guidance message table to the displaying means for display.

5. A terminal as claimed in either of claims 3 and 4 wherein execution of a control statement accessed from the control statement table can cause input signals to be generated by the keyboard causing the sequence pointer register to be overwritten to cause the execution of a function specified by another control statement identified by a non-sequential pointer in the sequence table.

Patentansprüche

1. Datenverarbeitungsterminal mit einer Tastatur (41) und durch programmierbare Rechenmittel so gesteuert, daß Transaktionen bewirkt werden, welche aus Folgen von bestimmten Datenverarbeitungsfunktionen aufgebaut sind, wobei wenigstens einige solche Funktionen erfordern, daß ein Unterprogramm aus sequentiellen Programmschritten durch die Rechenmittel durchgeführt wird, und mit einer an einen Wirtsrechner anschließbaren Schnittstelle, gekennzeichnet durch einen Steuertabellenspeicher (65), welcher so eingerichtet ist, daß er einen Satz von codierten Funktionssteueranweisungen enthält, auf welche einzeln zugegriffen werden kann, wobei für jede der bestimmten Datenverbeitungsfunktionen eine vorgesehen ist und die Datenverarbeitungsfunktionen durch sie bestimmt werden, einen Folgetabellenspeicher (63), welcher durch einen angeschlossenen Wirtsrechner über die Schnittstelle beschreibbar und so eingerichtet ist, daß er einen Satz von codierten Zeigern enthält, wobei jeder Zeiger eine zugeordnete Funktionssteueranweisung identifiziert, Folgesteuerungsmittel (121, 123, 125), welche ein Folgezeigerregister und ein Rückkehrregister enthalten, auf welche direkt durch einen angeschlossenen Wirtsrechner über die Schnittstelle und unabhängig durch die Tastatur zugegriffen werden kann, welche so eingerichtet ist, daß Zeiger aus dem Folgetabellenspeicher in Folge dahingehend wirksam gemacht werden, daß sie auf die ihnen zugeordneten Funktionssteuranweisung zugreifen, und ein Decodierlogik (129), welche so eingerichtet ist, daß sie die einzelnen Funktionssteueranweisungen, auf die so zugegriffen wurde, decodiert, um zu bewirken, daß das einer solchen Anweisung entsprechende Unterprogramm von Programmschritten durch die Rechenmittel ausgeführt wird, wodurch eine Transaktion unabhängig davon, ob sie durch den Wirtsrechner befohlen ist, allgemein durch die Durchführung einer Folge von Unterprogrammen von Datenverarbeitungsfunktionen bewirkt wird, welche durch die Folge von Funktionssteueranweisungen bestimmt ist, auf welche unter der Steuerung der Folgesteuermittel zugegriffen wurde, wobei eine solche Folge an einem durch das externe Laden der Folgesteuerungsmittel bestimmten beliebigen Punkt begonnen werden kann und in Echtzeit änderbar ist, indem der gesamte oder ein Teil des Folgetabellenspeichers durch den Wirtsrechner über die Schnittstelle umgeschrieben wird.

2. Terminal nach Anspruch 1, bei welchem das Folgezeigerregister mit Mitteln zur Inkrementierung seines Inhalts für ein Zeigen auf den nächsten sequentiellen Eintrag darin versehen ist.

3. Terminal nach Anspruch 1, bei welchem die Tastatur mit dem Folgetabellenspeicher über einen Übersetzungstabellenspeicher kombiniert ist, welcher auf Eingabezeichen aus der Tastatur darstellende Eingangssignale damit anspricht, daß auf in der Tabelle gespeicherte codierte Definitionen solcher Eingabezeichen zugegriffen wird, wobei einige der Definitionen einen Zeiger auf einen Eintrag in der Folgetabelle und andere der Definitionen eine Datencodedarstellung des entsprechenden Eingabezeichens enthalten, wobei ein Zeiger, wenn auf ihn zugegriffen wird, auf das Folgezeigeregister mit der Wirkung angewandt wird, daß eine Verwendung des bezeichneten Eintrags und im allgemeinen auch nachfolgender sequentieller Eintrage in Gang gesetzt wird.

4. Terminal nach Anspruch 3, welcher ferner Mittel zur Anzeige von Führungsnachrichten für einen

Bediener der Tastatur und einen eine Anzahl von Führungsnachrichten enthaltenden Führungsnachrichtentabellenspeicher aufweist, wobei die Folgetabelle Führungszeiger enthält, welche auf Eintrage in der Führungszeigertabelle hinweisen und welche, wenn auf sie zugegriffen wird, bewirken, daß die entsprechende Führungsnachricht aus der Führungsnachrichtentabelle für eine Anzeige auf die Anzeigemittel weitergegeben wird.

5. Terminal nach irgendeinem der Ansprüche 3 und 4, bei welchem die Ausführung einer Steueranweisung, auf welche aus der Steueranweisungstabelle zugegriffen wurde, durch die Tastatur zu erzeugende Eingabesignale bewirken kann, welche ein Überschreiben des Folgezeigeregisters bewirken, um die Ausführung einer Funktion zu bewirken, die durch eine durch einen nicht-sequentiellen Zeiger in der Folgetabelle identifizierte andere Steuernanweisung spezifiziert ist.

Revendications

1. Un terminal de traitement de données du type comprenant un clavier à touches (41) et commandé par un moyen de calcul programmable pour effectuer des transactions composées de séquences de fonctions prédéterminées de traitement de données, au moins certaines desdites fonctions nécessitant un sous-programme d'étapes séquentielles de programmation à exécuter par ledit moyen de calcul et comportant une interface pouvant être reliée à un processeur principal de données, caractérisé par une mémoire à tables de commandes (65) agencée pour contenir un ensemble d'instructions de commande de fonctions codées de façon à être individuellement accessibles et servant chacune à définir chacune desdites fonctions prédéterminées de traitement de données, une mémoire à tables de séquences (63) pouvant être directement écrite par un ordinateur principal raccordé par l'intermédiaire de l'interface et agencée de manière à contenir un ensemble de pointeurs codés, chaque pointeur identifiant une instruction associée de commande de fonction, des moyens de commande de séquences (121, 123, 125) comprenant un registre de pointeurs de séquences et un registre de retour, directement accessibles par un ordinateur principal raccordé par l'intermédiaire de l'interface et indépendamment par le clavier à touches adapté pour rendre des pointeurs de ladite mémoire de tables de séquences actifs dans une séquence en vue d'un accès à leurs instructions associées de commande de fonction, et une logique de décodage (129) adaptée pour décoder chaque instruction de commande de fonction ainsi atteinte pour faire en sorte que le sous-programme des étapes de programmation correspondant à cette instruction soit exécuté par lesdits moyens de calcul, de telle sorte qu'une transaction, qu'elle soit ou non commandée par l'ordinateur principal, soit effectuée d'une façon générale par exécution d'une séquence de sous-programmes de fonctions de traitement de données déterminées par l'instruction de commande de séquence de fonction qui a été atteinte sous la commande dudit moyen de commande de séquence, ladite séquence pouvant être amorcée en un point arbitraire déterminé par le chargement externe du moyen de commande de séquence, et pouvant être modifiée en temps réel par réécriture de la totalité ou d'une partie de la mémoire à tables de séquences par l'ordinateur principal par l'intermédiaire de l'interface.

2. Un terminal tel que revendiqué dans la revendication 1, dans lequel le registre de pointeurs de séquences est pourvu d'un moyen pour incrémenter son contenu en vue d'un pointage sur l'entrée séquentielle suivante dans celui-ci.

3. Un terminal tel que revendiqué dans la revendication 1, dans lequel le clavier à touches forme une interface avec la mémoire de tables de séquences par l'intermédiaire d'une mémoire de tables de traduction répondant à des signaux d'entrée représentant des caractères d'entrée provenant du clavier à touches en vue d'accéder à des définitions codées desdits caractères d'entrée, qui sont mémorisées dans la table, certaines des définitions comprenant un pointeur sur une entrée de la table de séquences et d'autres définitions contenant un code de données représentant le caractère d'entrée correspondant, un pointeur, s'il fait l'object d'un accès, étant appliqué au registre de pointeurs de séquences pour amorcer une utilisation de l'entrée pointée et, d'une façon générale, également d'entrée séquentielle suivant celle-ci.

4. Un terminal tel que revendiqué dans la revendication 3, comprenant en outre des moyens pour afficher des messages de guidage à un utilisateur du clavier à touches et une mémoire de tables de messages de guidage contenant une pluralité de messages de guidage, la table de séquences comprenant des pointeurs de guidage sur des entrées de la table de pointeurs de guidage qui, lorsqu'ils font l'objet d'un accès, assurent une transmission du message de guidage correspondant de la table de messages de guidage au moyen d'affichage en vue de son affichage.

5. Un terminal tel que revendiqué dans l'une des revendications 3 ou 4, dans lequel l'exécution d'une instruction de commande faisant l'objet d'un accès à partir de la table d'instructions de commande peut produire une génération de signaux d'entrée par le clavier à touches en provoquant un débordement d'écriture dans le registre de pointeurs de séquences afin d'assurer l'exécution d'une fonction spécifiée par une autre instruction de commande identifiée par un pointeur non-séquentiel dans la table de séquences.

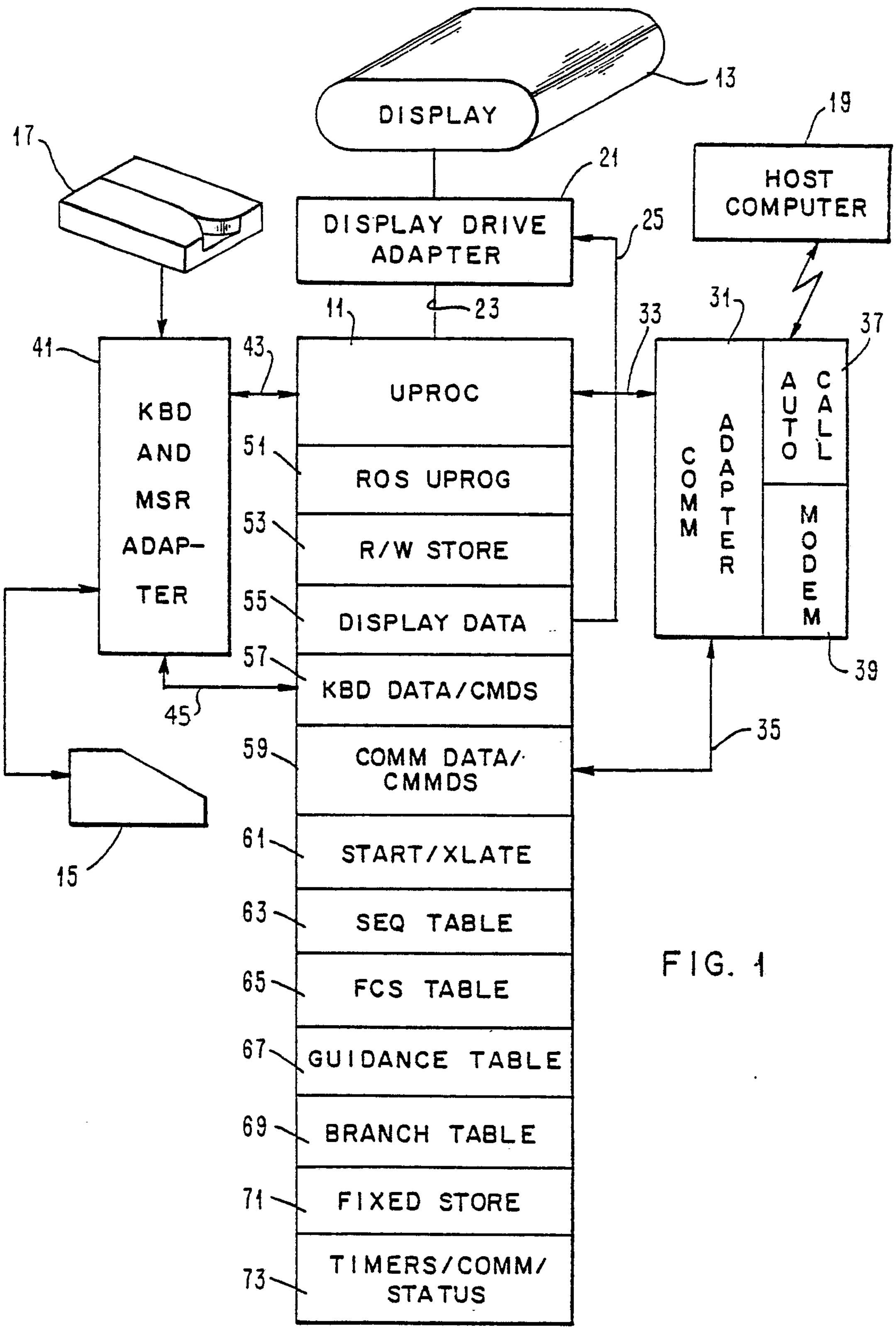
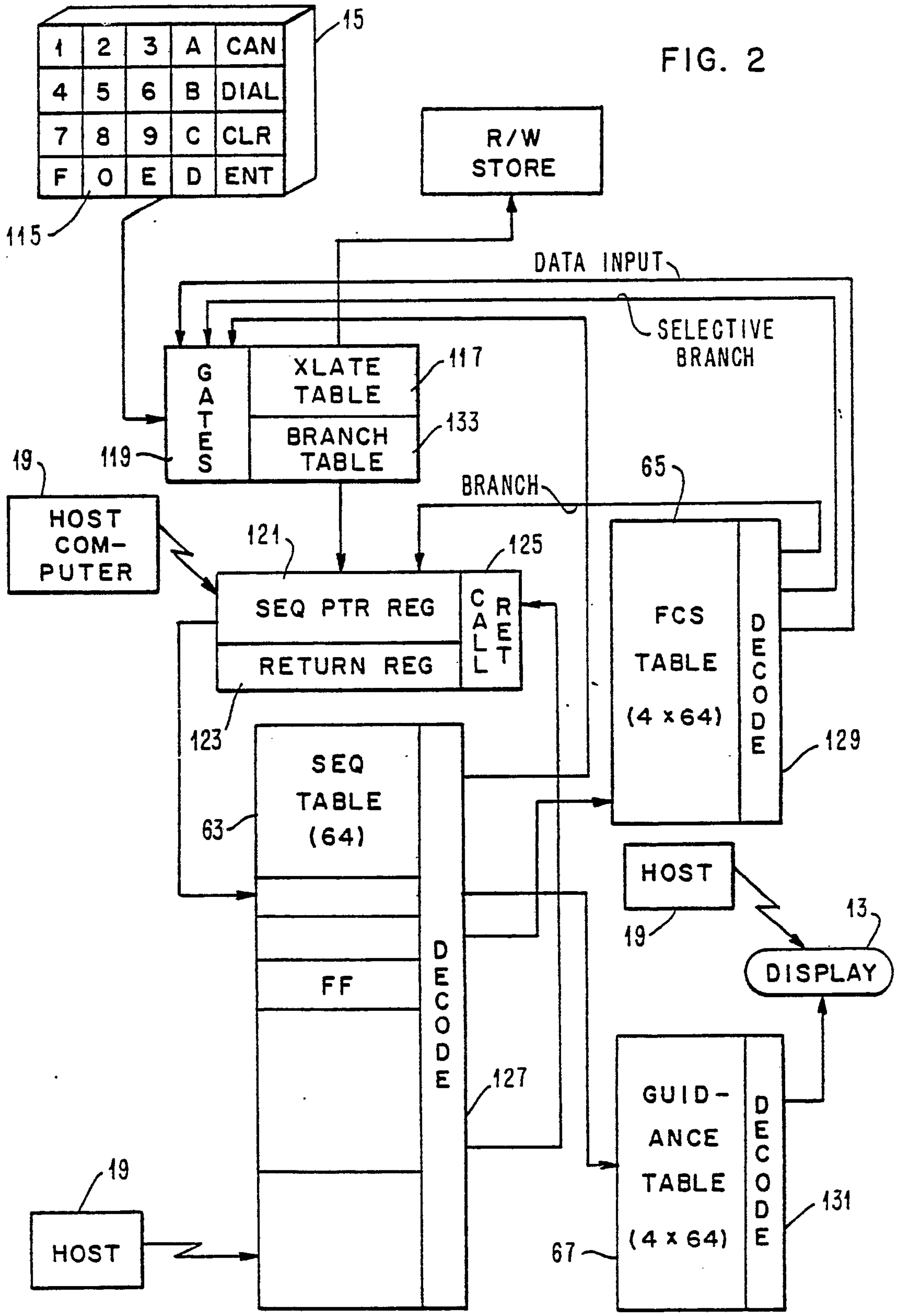

DISPLAY
13
17
19
HOST COMPUTER
21
DISPLAY DRIVE ADAPTER
25
23
11
33
31
37
41
KBD AND MSR ADAP-TER
43
UPROC
COMM ADAPTER
AUTO CALL
MODEM
51
ROS UPROG
53
R/W STORE
55
DISPLAY DATA
57
KBD DATA/CMDS
39
45
59
COMM DATA/ CMMDS
35
61
START/XLATE
15
63
SEQ TABLE
65
FCS TABLE
67
GUIDANCE TABLE
69
BRANCH TABLE
71
FIXED STORE
73
TIMERS/COMM/ STATUS

FIG. 1



1 2 3 A CAN
4 5 6 B DIAL
7 8 9 C CLR
F O E D ENT
15
115
R/W STORE
DATA INPUT
SELECTIVE BRANCH
GATES
XLATE TABLE
117
BRANCH TABLE
133
119
19
HOST COMPUTER
BRANCH
65
121
125
SEQ PTR REG
RETURN REG
CALL
RET
FCS TABLE (4 x 64)
DECODE
129
123
SEQ TABLE (64)
63
FF
DECODE
127
HOST
19
13
DISPLAY
GUIDANCE TABLE (4 x 64)
DECODE
131
67
19
HOST

FIG. 2

FIG. 3

START/TRANSLATE TABLE FORMAT

0	ASCII CHAR
1	SEQ POINTER

FIG. 4

SEQUENCE TABLE FORMAT

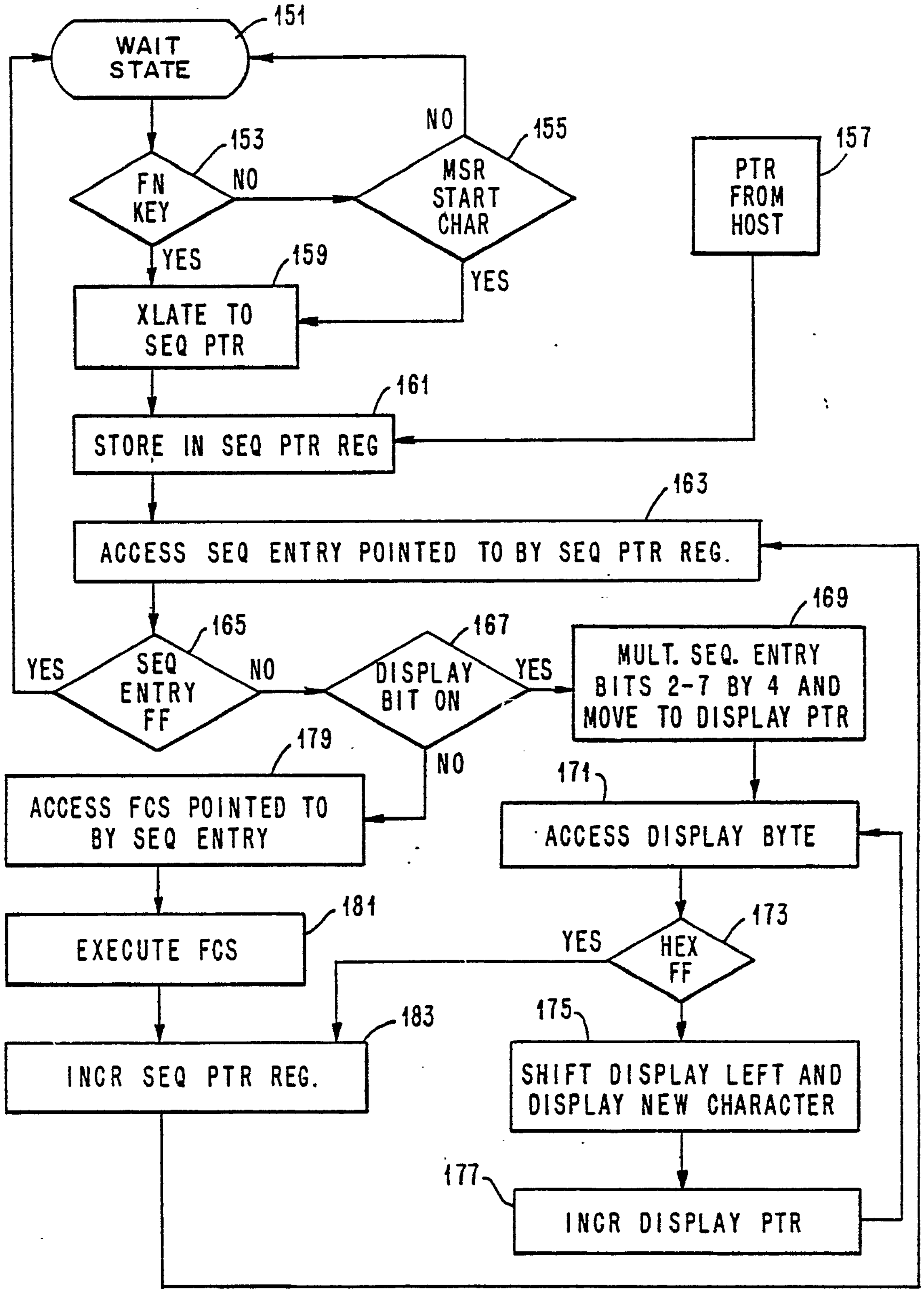
0	0	FCS POINTER	
0	1	GUIDANCE POINTER	
1	0	SEQ POINTER	CALL
1	1	NOT USED	RETURN

NOTE: THE X IN BYTE 2 MEANS THE VALUE MAY BE EITHER 0 OR 1.

FIG. 5

BYTE 0	BYTE 1	BYTE 2: 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	BYTE 3	FUNCTION
00000001	FLD LEN	0	0	1	1	1	0	X	IGNORED	LZ, VAR, WAIT, KBD INPUT
	FLD LEN	0	0	0	1	1	0	X	DELIMIT	VAR, WAIT, KDB INPUT
	FLD LEN	0	0	0	0	0	0	X	IGNORED	FIX LEN, NO WAIT, KBD INPUT
	FLD LEN	0	0	0	0	1	0	X	IGNORED	FIX LEN, WAIT, KBD INPUT
00000011	IGNORED	IGNORED							IGNORED	MSR TRK 2 READ INPUT
00001001	IGNORED	0	0	0	0	0	0	X	DATA	IMD DATA BYTE INPUT
00000110	FLD LEN	0	Y	0	0	0	X	X	DISPLACE	STOR AREA 1 INPUT
00000111	" "				"				"	" " 2 "
00001000	" "				"				"	" " 3 "
00001001	" "				"				"	" " 4 "
00001010	IGNORED	0	0	0	0	X	0	0	IGNORED	TRANSMIT
00001011	POINTER	IGNORED							IGNORED	FIXED BRANCH
00001100	POINTER	0	0	0	0	X	X	X	DATA	VAR BRANCH - CONDITIONAL
	IGNORED	1	0	0	0	X	0	X	IGNORED	VAR BRANCH - SELECTIVE
		(SEE NOTE)								

FIG. 6



151
WAIT STATE
153
FN KEY
NO
YES
155
MSR START CHAR
NO
YES
157
PTR FROM HOST
159
XLATE TO SEQ PTR
161
STORE IN SEQ PTR REG
163
ACCESS SEQ ENTRY POINTED TO BY SEQ PTR REG.
165
SEQ ENTRY FF
YES
NO
167
DISPLAY BIT ON
YES
NO
169
MULT. SEQ. ENTRY BITS 2-7 BY 4 AND MOVE TO DISPLAY PTR
179
ACCESS FCS POINTED TO BY SEQ ENTRY
171
ACCESS DISPLAY BYTE
181
EXECUTE FCS
173
HEX FF
YES
183
INCR SEQ PTR REG.
175
SHIFT DISPLAY LEFT AND DISPLAY NEW CHARACTER
177
INCR DISPLAY PTR